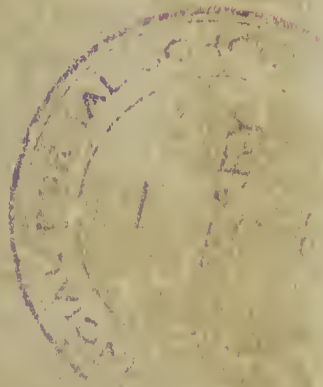


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EIGHT
LITTLE PLAYS
FOR
CHILDREN

BY E. W. LEMAN

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EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS
FOR CHILDREN

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

FAIRIES AND CHIMNEYS

THE FAIRY GREEN

THE FAIRY FLUTE

THE RAINBOW CAT

A SMALL CRUSE

THE ROSE FYLEMAN FAIRY BOOK

FORTY GOOD-NIGHT TALES

FAIRIES AND FRIENDS

THE ADVENTURE CLUB

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

BY
ROSE FYLEMAN

THIRD EDITION



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TO MY FRIEND
MARGARET McCRAE—
the little Golden Key

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EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

DARBY AND JOAN

CHARACTERS

DARBY

JOAN

A FAIRY

The scenery consists of one of those little cardboard houses in which the usual Darby and Joan are fixed. There are two doors, and between the doors a little bench against the wall. The front of the house is all that is seen. This can be made at home with stout cardboard and wooden supports.

It must be remembered the doors must be high enough to allow the children to come through without stooping. Inside the house, between the doors, so that they cannot be seen, are a small table, crockery, etc.

Application for permission to perform any of the plays in this volume should be addressed to the Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers, No. 1 Central Buildings, London, S.W.1.

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

It adds very much to the effect if DARBY and JOAN keep quite stiff until the FAIRY removes the spell, and again later on. They should hardly move their heads.

JOAN wears a print dress down to her ankles, a sun-bonnet and a shawl and apron. DARBY wears leggings and a smock (or a coat if preferred) and a red handkerchief round his neck. He has a battered felt hat and looks well with a beard. The FAIRY wears a fairy dress under a cloak. When the curtain rises JOAN is just inside one door, over which "Fine" is written. DARBY is just outside the other, over which "Wet" is written.

Properties.—Umbrella, small gong (for clock), table, mugs, cheese, jug, bread and knife (it is well to have these ready on a tray), wand for FAIRY.

D. You all right, dear?

J. Yes, thank you. I wish it would get a little duller so that I could go right inside and do a bit of work.

D. It looks very much like rain. I believe it is going to rain. (*Holds out his hand.*) Yes, it's begun.

DARBY AND JOAN

J. Here's your umbrella, darling. I don't want you to get rheumatism.

(She hands it to him from within. He stretches out his arm. Neither of them moves back or forward.)

D. Thank you, dear. I think I'm pretty well stationary for to-day. *(Pause, puts up umbrella.)* Joan!

J. Yes, dear?

D. I wonder how much longer we shall have to go on like this. I'm dying to see you. Do you know, it's ten years since it happened. I'm sick and tired of it. I think it's a most cruel arrangement. Fancy never seeing your own wife.

J. Oh, darling, you know it was our own fault. We did quarrel rather. Didn't we?

D. Yes, love. But I think we've been punished quite enough. If the Fairy Queen knew how peaceable we had grown——

(Enter FAIRY, left. Stands listening. She wears a cloak.)

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

- J.* I really can't think why we were so silly. Such foolish things we used to quarrel about, too. That old hat of yours that you wouldn't wear straight. How I should love to see you in it now.
- D.* Yes, and the way you cut the bread. (*Sadly.*) I have to cut my own now.
- J.* How's the weather, dear?
- D.* Oh, pretty bad. (*Looks round and sees FAIRY.*)
- D.* Hullo, Miss, would you like to shelter?
- F.* That's very kind of you. But I've got a cloak, thank you.
- J.* Who's that?
- D.* A lady, Mother.
- J.* Oh, do come in. I can't come out.
- F.* Thank you. I'll just sit on this bench and rest a minute if I may. The rain's stopping. (*She sits on bench.*)
- D.* We are Darby and Joan. You've heard about us, maybe?
- F.* Oh yes, you're so happy with one another that people always say, "As happy as Darby and Joan," don't they?
- D.* Yes, but we weren't always like that. We got punished for quarrelling. And

DARBY AND JOAN

now she's always in when I'm out, and out when I'm in, according to the weather. We have to do it. We can't help it. It's a spell.

F. Oh, you poor dears!

J. Yes, isn't it hard? We haven't really seen one another properly for years and years and years. I do think if the fairies knew how we'd changed——

F. (*throwing off cloak*). Well, as a matter of fact, I'm a fairy myself, and you've been so kind about the rain that I'll be delighted to do anything I can. It'll be twelve o'clock in a minute or two, and that's a very good time for me to-day as it happens. I can do anything I like at twelve o'clock on Fridays—just one thing a week. (*Comes down stage.*)

D. How very interesting. Can all the fairies?

F. Oh, the Queen can do magic at any time. The chief lords and ladies once a day. Ordinary fairies once a week, and some of them less. There are some who only get a turn on the 29th of February. That's very rare though. So I'll allow

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

you to come out together at twelve o'clock.

D. and *J.* Oh, how lovely! And may we stay like that?

F. Well, there's a condition, of course.

D. and *J.* Oh, of course!

F. If you don't quarrel during the first hour you will remain free; but if you do, it'll be "One, two, three. As you were."

D. and *J.* (*together*). Of course we shan't quarrel in an hour. We shall never quarrel again.

F. Oh, very well. (*Clock strikes.*) Listen! Twelve o'clock. (*Waves her wand.*)

Darby and Joan your punishment's o'er;
Be again as you were before.

Farewell. And beware! (*Goes out.*)

(*DARBY and JOAN rush out and fall into each other's arms.*)

J. Oh, darling, how good it is to see you again!
(*Looks at him.*) You've still got your hat on one side.

D. Oh, never mind that now!

J. Let's have dinner out here. It's clearing up.

DARBY AND JOAN

D. All right. I'll help you, dear.

(They bring out a table, bread, cheese, sausage, and a jug of beer, plates and mugs. They sit on the bench. The following remarks are made as the meal goes on.)

J. How lovely it will be to have a meal together.

D. Yes; I've never really enjoyed a mouthful these ten years.

J. *(looking at table)*. There, I think that's everything.

D. Yes, come and sit down, Mother. Isn't it wonderful? *(Looks up and sees JOAN cutting bread.)* I see you haven't learnt to cut bread. *(Laughs.)*

J. Well, there! *(Hands him piece.)* Not much the matter with that!

D. No, dear. But there'll be a hole in the middle of the loaf if you go on. I do think you might make an effort as it's our first dinner together after so long.

J. *(looking up)*. If it comes to that, you might make an effort to keep your hat straight for once. I never saw such a sight.

D. I like it like that.

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

J. And I like the bread like that.

D. Joan, you're forgetting. We shall be quarrelling in a minute.

J. I'm forgetting nothing and I'm not quarrelling. I only remarked that I thought you might have learnt by now to put your hat on straight.

D. I never knew such a nagging woman.
(*Gets up.*)

J. (*also gets up. They talk across the table.*)
Who's quarrelling now?

(*FAIRY comes quietly in at side.*)

D. Quarrelling? You're enough to make an angel quarrel.

J. Well, you're no angel, that's certain. And if you were, you'd have your halo crooked.

D. I might have known what it would be like. You've no control over your temper, Joan, and it's a great pity.

J. Pity! It's a pity I ever married you, Darby.

D. You're not so sorry as I am. It was the greatest mistake of my life.

(*FAIRY comes forward.*)

DARBY AND JOAN

F. Darby and Joan! Darby and Joan!

(They both stand petrified.)

D. and J. Can't we have another chance?
We forgot.

(FAIRY shakes her head.)

F. I'm afraid not. Anyway, not for ten years.

D. May we say good-bye?

F. Certainly.

D. and J. Good-bye, darling. *(They kiss.)*

J. I can feel the spell coming on again. It's pulling.

D. So can I.

*(She backs slowly to her door and DARBY to his.
Silence.)*

J. Darby dear, I'll try to learn to cut the bread properly.

D. *(putting his hat straight)*. And I'll try to remember about my hat.

F. And in ten years I'll come back again and unspell you.

(They all sing.)

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

Darby and Joan, Darby and Joan,
Why couldn't they leave one another alone?
Darby and Joan, Darby and Joan,
It really was nobody's fault but their own.
They quarrelled and quarrelled when they were
together,
So now they are simply controlled by the
weather.
There never was tale, I am sure you will own,
So sad as the story of Darby and Joan.

CURTAIN

THE FAIRY RIDDLE

A GARDEN PLAY

CHARACTERS

FAIRY QUEEN

GREEN GRIG, her page

ELSIE, a village child

SCENE.—*A Glade.*

(Enter the FAIRY QUEEN and her attendant gnome, GREEN GRIG. She comes in right and sits down on a knoll left, puts her chin on her hand and heaves a deep sigh. GREEN GRIG stands a little behind her with his hands folded on his chest.)

F. Q. Sit down, Grig.

G. Yes, your Majesty. *(Sits cross-legged.)*

F. Q. *(Sighs again.)*

G. Yes, your Majesty?

F. Q. I didn't say anything.

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

G. No, your Majesty. But I thought your Majesty sighed something.

F. Q. (*laughs*). Grig, how absurd you are.

G. Yes, your Majesty. (*Hesitates.*)

Of course I'm only your Majesty's humble servant, but if I could be of any use . . . I know I can't do magic, and I'm not a bit of good at spells, but they say Shakespeare couldn't spell, your Majesty, and he was quite the best thing that ever came out of Fairyland. Always excepting your Majesty, of course. But I've always been told that I have lots of common sense, though I know I don't look very brainy. You see, most of us only have *un*common sense, and sometimes it's not much use. But my mother was a mortal, you know, and that does make a difference.

F. Q. Well, Grig; I'll tell you what's bothering me. Perhaps you may have a suggestion to make. Everyone will know about it by to-morrow, anyway. I mentioned it to one of the butterflies yesterday, and you know what gossips *they* are. You remember the silver cloak the King

THE FAIRY RIDDLE

brought me a little while ago from Star-land?

G. Oh *yes*, your Majesty.

F. Q. Well, I've lost it.

G. Lost it!

(He gets up and kneels on one knee in front of QUEEN, listening intently.)

F. Q. Yes. I took it off the other night when we were dancing. It was rather in the way. I hung it on the elder bush in the Fairy Glen, and I forgot about it and left it there all night.

G. Oh, your Majesty! And that elder bush is such a spiteful old thing.

F. Q. Of course it was frightfully careless. The King would be so annoyed if he knew. He had it specially woven for me. It was stolen.

G. Stolen?

F. Q. Yes. I've found out who has it. It's the Queen of the Grey Goblins. She's been wearing it. The impertinence!

G. Has your Majesty taken any steps?

F. Q. I sent her a polite note to say that I

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

was sure it had been taken by accident, and would she kindly return it.

G. What did she say?

F. Q. She says . . . I've got her reply somewhere. Where's my bag?

(GRIG *finds it and gives it her. She opens letter and reads.*)

“To the Queen of the Fairies.

“The Queen of the Grey Goblins presents her compliments to the Queen of the Fairies, and begs to remind her of the well-known Fairy Law, ‘Finding’s keeping.’”

G. I do wish your Majesty would get some of the laws altered. They are so awkward sometimes.

F. Q. But no decent person takes any notice of them.

G. I know. But when you have to do with people like the Grey Goblin lot . . .

F. Q. I wrote back and said that I should be glad to pay any of the usual forfeits. And she's sent me a riddle.

G. Well, that might be all right.

F. Q. That's just it. It isn't all right.

It's an idiotic riddle and no one can guess

THE FAIRY RIDDLE

it. Of course it isn't in any of the ordinary magic-books. They badly want revising. I've had the three court magicians at work on it for three days and three nights.

G. Oh, that's why they have been so cross.

F. Q. Yes, poor dears. It's very wearing. They're all getting such deep frowns with thinking, that they can't keep their spectacles on.

G. May I hear it, your Majesty?

F. Q. Oh, I suppose you may as well. Here it is, Grig. (*Hands letter.*) Can you read?

G. (*hurt*). Oh, *yes*, your Majesty. I went to the Toadschool.

(*Reads*). "What is it you sleep on, comb your hair with, and keep your money in?"
It sounds very easy.

F. Q. That's what's so vexing.

G. Go to sleep on—comb your hair . . .
Bank . . . But you don't comb your hair with a bank. Comb . . . (*Brightly.*)
Perhaps it has something to do with bees.

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

F. Q. Don't be silly, Grig. You don't go to sleep on bees.

(Enter ELSIE right, looking for something. She does not see GRIG and FAIRY QUEEN at first.)

F. Q. A child. Quick, Grig, let's go.

G. No, your Majesty. She may help us.

F. Q. Oh, Grig, you do have good ideas.

(To ELSIE.) Good morning. You seem to be looking for something.

E. Good morning. You're—you're the Fairy Queen, aren't you?

F. Q. Yes, and you're Elsie. How did you know me?

E. Oh, your Majesty, anybody would know the Fairy Queen, wouldn't they?

F. Q. (*aside*). Quite a nice child.

(To ELSIE.) This is my trusty page, Green Grig.

E. How do you do, Mr. Green Grig?

G. I'm very well, thank you. Can I be of any assistance?

E. I've lost a sixpence. I was going to the village to buy a little pot of honey for my

THE FAIRY RIDDLE

mother. It's her birthday to-morrow and she's very fond of honey. I've been saving up for such a long time, and now it's gone. There must have been a hole in my pocket.

F. Q. Oh, we'll soon find that. Grig, just look in my pocket magic-book for a charm for finding a lost sixpence.

G. Yes, your Majesty. (*Turns over page of book.*) Here we are. "Sixpence—To find a lost. Form a circle. Go round three times to the left and three times to the right, taking care to lift the feet well, and singing the following rhyme with left eye shut :—

Where d'you lurk? Where d'you lie?
Silver sixpence, don't be shy.
Fairy eyes can soon espy
What no others see—oh!
Show your little shining face,
We shall find your hiding-place,
Round and round and round we pace,
One and two and three—oh!"

F. Q. Come along, we'll soon do that.

(They follow the directions, singing the song.)

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

G. There it is. Just under that dandelion leaf. (*Picks it up and gives it to ELSIE.*)

E. Oh, thank you ever so much. How lovely to be a fairy. I wish I could do things like that.

F. Q. But sometimes mortals know things that we don't, and then they can help *us*.

E. Oh, I should love to be able to help a fairy. But I'm much too stupid. I'm always bottom of my class.

F. Q. So used I to be when I went to school.

E. Oh, your Majesty!

G. Are you any good at riddles?

E. I'm afraid not.

F. Q. That's a pity.

G. Try her anyway, your Majesty.

F. Q. Can you tell me what you sleep on, comb your hair with, and keep your money in?

E. Why, of course I can—a bed, a comb, and a purse. That's quite easy.

G. (*claps his hands*). Of course, of course, your Majesty. She's found the answer.

THE FAIRY RIDDLE

Ha-ha-ha! A bed, a comb, and a purse.
That's it. Hooray, hooray!

F. Q. (puzzled). A bed—a comb—and a purse.
But . . . Why, of course . . . Oh, Grig,
how clever of you to have seen it. I
never should. (*To ELSIE.*) We're so
much obliged, Elsie. It's the Grey Gob-
lins' Queen, you know. She's got my
star-silver cloak and won't give it back
until we've answered the riddle.

E. I see. Will she give it you back now?

F. Q. Oh, yes. I don't like her much, but
she's quite straight about things like that.
She'd have to be, anyway. The whole
of Fairyland would be down on her. It's
one of the rules.

E. I think if you'll excuse me I ought to be
going on to get the honey. The shop will
be closed.

F. Q. (patting her on the shoulder). Quite right,
my dear. Mothers first. I hope you'll
come and see us in Fairyland some even-
ing. I'll send Grig round to fetch you
one night. He'll just knock at the pane.
You needn't dress.

E. Oh, *thank* you, your Majesty. (*Kneels and*

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

kisses the QUEEN'S hand.) Good-bye.
Good-bye, Mr. Grig.

G. Good-bye.

(ELSIE goes.)

F. Q. A nice child. I'm glad we found her sixpence. Isn't it splendid about the riddle? I shall have my darling cloak to-night. Come along, Grig, let's dance home.

G. and F. Q. (*dance and sing as they go out*).

The wicked Queen of the Goblins Grey
She stole the star-silver cloak away.

She thinks she has it for ever and aye.

She won't be feeling so merry to-day.

We've guessed the riddle—hooray! hooray!

CURTAIN

NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

This little play can be performed in any room. The KING and QUEEN should wear crowns and any kind of fanciful dress. Coloured tablecloths make good cloaks.

CHARACTERS

A KING

A QUEEN

A LORD CHAMBERLAIN

(The KING and QUEEN are sitting at a table covered with papers, the KING is supporting his head on his hand and looks troubled. The QUEEN is adding up accounts. She has a pile of small books in front of her.)

Queen (looking worried, murmurs). I'm certain we didn't have two boars' heads last week. We shall have to have a fresh Court Butcher. What a dreadful nuisance these people are! . . . Six into four won't go.

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

Six into forty-seven, seven and four over.

(Counts on her fingers.) No, five over.

King (pushing away papers). Oh, I'm so tired of ruling.

Q. So am I.

K. Let's have a game!

Q. Yes, but what?

K. Cat's Cradle would be jolly, but we haven't any string.

Q. I had a lovely big ball—pink, very nice—but people *will* come and borrow it.

K. What about Noughts and Crosses?

Q. (claps her hands). The very thing. Here's a bit of paper.

K. (draws lines). There. You begin. (Pushes paper across to QUEEN.)

Q. Very well. I'll have Noughts. (She draws and pushes the paper back.)

K. (draws and pushes paper back again). Your turn.

Q. (drawing). Wouldn't it be awful if the Lord Chamberlain came in and caught us?

K. (drawing). He won't. He's busy. Besides, what would it matter? You don't imagine I'm afraid of my own Chamberlain?

NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

Q. Oh, but he's so frightfully particular about the dignity of the crown, you know. He was horrified the other day because he found out that I'd been out to tea without my sceptre. He says it's encouraging socialism. There, that's my game.

K. (*disappointed*). Oh, is it? I quite thought I had you that time. But you talked so much I couldn't think. Let's have another. Here's a nice large piece of paper.

(*They play again. The CHAMBERLAIN appears at back.*)

Ch. Your Majesty . . .

(*KING and QUEEN start violently. The KING tries to cover up game.*)

Ch. I've come for the plan of the new Council-chamber, your Majesty. Your Majesty promised to look at it.

K. (*nervously*). Oh, yes, to be sure. (*He turns over the sheet with the game on it, and discovers plan on the back.*)

Ch. That looks rather like the plan, your Majesty.

K. (*stammers*). Er-er . . . I haven't quite

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

finished with it. We thought of making a few suggestions.

Ch. (reproachfully). But your Majesty promised that the architect should have it back at noon. The builders are all standing waiting to begin. Your Majesty has never been known to break your Majesty's royal word. It would never do, your Majesty. Your Majesty's honour is at stake.

(The KING tries to rub out game with his sleeve. The QUEEN, with a little nod and a meaning look, gently takes sheet from him.)

Q. (to KING). Oh, but I think we'd quite finished with it, dear. Don't you remember?

(The KING tries to look intelligent.)

Q. (handing paper to CHAMBERLAIN). Here you are, Chamberlain. And on the back you will see a little sketch we have made of a pleasure-ground to go in front of the buildings. We thought little paths would be nice—crossing, you see—and little summer-houses dotted about for the Councillors to sit in. These little round

NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

things are the summer-houses. And we thought we could have sun-dials too, for the Councillors to tell the time by. The crosses are the sun-dials. It will be so nice to have several sun-dials, in case one goes wrong. I think the Chamberlain ought to have a summer-house all to himself, don't you, dear? You'd like that, wouldn't you, Chamberlain?

Ch. An excellent idea, your Majesty. I will explain to the architect. An excellent idea. Little summer-houses—charming. Sun-dials—delightful. (*Goes out bowing.*)

Q. Oh, my love, what an escape!

K. (*anxiously*). You don't think he knew?

Q. Of course not. He's never played Noughts and Crosses in his life.

K. (*kisses her hand*). My dear, you're a marvel. (*Looks at his watch.*) By Jove, lunch-time. I wonder what they'll give us.

Q. I know. I ordered it. . . . I'll tell you. (*Whispers in his ear.*)

K. Hooray! (*As they go out.*) You really are a marvel.

CURTAIN

THE WEATHER CLERK

CHARACTERS

TIMOTHY CAREY, the Weather Clerk

MOTHER CAREY, his wife

THE NORTH WIND

A WICKED MAGICIAN

REGINALD, servant to the WICKED MAGICIAN

SCENE.—*The Weather Clerk's Office. There should be a desk, also sacks and boxes, labelled Thunder, Lightning, Hail, Fog, etc. Earthquakes should be, if possible, in a strong-looking chest.*

It would add to the effect if there were some large ledgers, and there should be a basket labelled "Complaints," overflowing with letters. A meteorological chart might hang on wall at back, and there should be a telephone beside or on the desk.

The WEATHER CLERK is sitting at his desk when the curtain rises.

THE WEATHER CLERK

He can be dressed in any suitably fantastic garb. An old-fashioned tail-coat with tight-fitting knee-breeches would look well, and a high collar and stock.

He should have a quill behind one ear. His wife is sitting in an arm-chair. She is plucking a goose or a white chicken and putting the feathers into a bag. She wears a shawl and apron.

T. C. (putting down his newspaper and pushing back his spectacles). I don't know what we're coming to, Jenny. They all think they know better than I do. What with their meteorological reports, and their pressure charts, and their seismic calculations and their observation stations, I might as well not be here at all.

M. C. What nonsense, Timothy. They couldn't possibly do without you.

T. And then all these people bothering me for fine weather for this and that. I simply can't keep pace with it. It's wearing me out.

M. C. You need a holiday, dear.

T. Of course I need a holiday, but I shan't

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

get one. Those wretched Winds and the Rain are always getting into mischief as it is, and if I didn't keep a tight hand on them, where *should* I be? Do you remember last time I had a day off, and the North Wind and the East Wind quarrelled, and there was such an awful blizzard in China that people thought the end of the world had come?

M. C. Yes, indeed I do.

T. Mine's not such an easy job as people think. (*Gets up.*) I'm just going down into the cellar to see what clouds I have in hand. They're wanting rain very badly in England.

M. C. You know, dear, you got a little mixed over the English weather this year. I believe you sent them a parcel of oddments by mistake instead of their proper consignment.

T. Nonsense, Mother. They always grumble. It's a habit they have. They really do very well on the whole. If I didn't give them a bit of change now and then they'd have nothing to grumble about, and they wouldn't like it. Indeed,

THE WEATHER CLERK

I doubt if they'd have anything to talk about at all. (*Going out right.*) Keep an eye on the North Wind, he's been restless lately.

M. C. All right. He's in the orchard drying the clothes for me. He's quite happy.

(*She ties up the bag of feathers, puts a label marked "Snow" on it and puts it in a corner. Then comes back to her seat.*)

M. C. There now, *that's* done, and they're all ready if they're wanted. You never know. Timothy makes up his mind so suddenly sometimes. And now I think I'll just sit down quietly for a few minutes and rest a little. It's very warm. (*Yawns.*) I wonder if Timothy has left any thunder about. I really think—I must—— (*Yawns again, nods, sleeps. Enter left, on tiptoe, the WICKED MAGICIAN. He wears a high hat and a cloak and carries a large bag with a black cat painted on it. He is followed by his servant, REGINALD.*)

W. M. Ha, ha! She sleeps. My lady sleeps. And Timothy is doubtless out.

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

(He goes behind MOTHER CAREY'S chair and makes passes, chanting the following verse. REGINALD stands by, looking much surprised and decidedly frightened.)

W. M. Sleep, sleep, Mother Carey;
 Work, work, Wizard Wary.
 Sail, sail to slumber shore;
 Dream, dream, snore, snore.
 We are watching very near;
 Snore, my pretty, never fear.
 Sleep, sleep, Mother Carey.
 Work, work, Wizard Wary.

Now we can take whatever we like. Hush !

(He tiptoes round room, investigating.)

I wonder where he keeps the thunder. If only I can get hold of the thunder I can soon knock the world to bits. Ah, here are the earthquake fuses. *(Opens his bag and stuffs in something from a box.)* Ha, ha! I'll spoil their garden parties. I'll knock down their houses. I'll frighten 'em into fits. Floods, storms, hailstones. Oh, what a time I'll have in the world. He'll be sorry now that he didn't let me have fine weather for my birthday. Now

THE WEATHER CLERK

where's that thunder? Oh, here! Come along, Reginald, and hold the bag open.

(He opens the thunder sack and appears to be carefully transferring something. There should be a large stone which REGINALD somehow contrives to drop into the bottom of the sack with a bump. It need not be seen if REGINALD stands in front of the sack.)

W. M. Careful, you fool. There, you've wakened the old woman with your clumsiness.

M. C. *(opens her eyes and sits up. She sees the WICKED MAGICIAN and calls out).* Timothy! Timothy!

W. M. Timothy's not here, my lass. But I can't have you making that noise. Here, Reginald, tie her up.

M. C. Don't you dare to touch me, you cowardly ruffian. *(Rushes to right.)* Timothy!

(TIMOTHY enters right. He rushes at the WICKED MAGICIAN and knocks him down and holds him. REGINALD kneels on floor with an expression of abject terror.)

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

T. Quick, Mother, call North Wind.

M. C. (*rushes out left calling*). North Wind!
Help! Help!

T. You bad old villain, you. You're at your old tricks again, are you? I'll teach you to steal my weather. You shall get blown over the moon into Nowhere. You won't get back in a hurry.

(*Enter MOTHER CAREY and NORTH WIND.*)

T. Here, North Wind, help us to get him to his feet, then blow your hardest.

(*They pull the WICKED MAGICIAN up on to his feet, and then take him by the shoulders and push him out left, NORTH WIND blowing hard all the time. It would produce an excellent effect if during the previous scuffle TIMOTHY could attach the MAGICIAN'S hat to a cord held by someone in the wings so that his hat would appear to blow off before he goes. NORTH WIND goes out, still blowing, and TIMOTHY stands looking up left, roaring with laughter.*)

T. There he goes. (*Waves.*) Good-bye, dear friend. Hope you'll have a pleasant

THE WEATHER CLERK

journey. Ha, ha, ha! He looks like an old spider sailing in the sky. Come and look, Mother.

(Turns and sees MOTHER CAREY wiping her eyes.)

What, crying? Come now, that'll never do. You ought to be smiling now that it's all over. I shall have to get out the Rainbow box and find you a new shawl.

(NORTH WIND returns. TIMOTHY shakes hands with him.)

T. Well done, my boy. You shall have a week's holiday for this.

(Sees REGINALD, who is still kneeling.)

Hullo, young man; you're a fine coward. What shall we do with him, North Wind? Will you blow him into the middle of next week?

R. Oh, no, sir, please don't let him. I'm not bad really. I've got quite a good heart. I have, indeed. But he frightened me so with his wicked tricks I daren't disobey him. Don't blow me away, sir.

M. C. Let him off, Timothy. I dare say he'll be quite useful. He could do some cloud-

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

herding ; we often want someone for odd jobs like that.

T. Well, young man, you've had a narrow escape. You won't get off so lightly another time, mind you. Take him into the garden, North Wind, and find him a job. Don't be too rough with him.

(NORTH WIND *and* REGINALD *go out.*)

Now, my girl, where's that Rainbow box ?

(*Telephone bell rings. TIMOTHY goes to answer it.*)

Hullo ! Hullo ! I'm the Weather Clerk. Who are you ? English meteorological office ? Yes ? What do you want ? Fine weather for next Bank Holiday ? Oh, certainly, certainly ! You can have a week. How'll that do ?

(*Comes back smiling.*)

WON'T they be surprised ?

CURTAIN

THE FAIRY AND THE DOLL

CHARACTERS

SILVERWING, a fairy

PATTY'S DOLL. (*The doll should speak in a squeaky voice.*)

SCENE.—*A Garden.*

The DOLL is lying flat on her face on the ground with arms and legs stretched out.

(*Enter SILVERWING.*)

S. Why, here's Patty's doll, left to spend the night in the garden. Oh, cruel Patty. Get up, my dear, you'll get stiff if you lie there all night.

D. I can't. I'm a doll. Dolls can't.

S. Oh, I forgot. I'll soon make that all right.

(*She circles round the DOLL, waving her wand, and touches the doll on legs and arms.*)

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

Each time she touches her the DOLL gives a little jerk.)

- S. Tilly, tally, tolly, tell,
I will weave a magic spell.
Tippy, tappy, toppy, tup,
Now you'll find you can get up.
- D. *(sitting up and still speaking in a squeaky voice).* Who are you?
- S. I'm a fairy.
- D. Oh! Where do you live?
- S. I'm living in the lilac tree at the corner of the lawn just now. But I shall move next month. The lilac's nearly over.
- D. It must be pretty to live in a tree.
- S. Yes. Better than being knocked about in a nursery. I wonder you stand it.
- D. It's not very nice sometimes. Patty does forget so. She leaves me in the most dreadful places.
- S. It's a great shame. *(Pause.)* I know what I'll do.

(Waves wand and again circles round.)

Jeery, jary, jiry, jore,
You shall be a doll no more.

THE FAIRY AND THE DOLL

Leery, lory, liry, lary,
You are changed into a fairy.

(The DOLL gets up and moves lightly about. She waves her arms and dances a few steps.)

D. Oh, how lovely! How pleased Patty will be to have a real live doll.

S. Oh, but you can't go back to Patty. That would never do. You're a fairy now and you must come and live in Fairyland. Besides, I'm sure you don't want to be a doll again. Patty wasn't a bit nice to you, you know.

D. Oh yes, she was. Only careless. You see, she loves me very much. I'm afraid I couldn't leave Patty.

S. *(rather cross)*. Why didn't you say so before?

D. You never told me that . . .

S. *(interrupting)*. Do you mean to say you'd like to be changed back again into a stiff, stupid doll living in the nursery and never having any fun, when you might be a fairy, and dance and frolic in the woods all day and sleep on the swaying lilac boughs at night with stars twinkling at you?

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

D. It sounds very nice. But . . . (*shaking her head*) I can't leave Patty.

S. (*crossly*). Oh, very well. If you won't, you won't.

(*Same business as before.*)

Toffy, taffy, teffy, tiff,
Arms and legs again are stiff.
Tilly, tally, tully, toll,
Change again into a doll.

(*DOLL falls back on to the ground.*)

S. (*looking at her*). You *are* a funny creature, you know. But I think it's rather sweet of you to stick to Patty. I'll tell the Fairy King to see that you don't take any harm. Good-bye.

D. (*squeakily*). Good-bye !

CURTAIN

CABBAGES AND KINGS

A Play in Two Scenes

CHARACTERS

KING CORUM

His wife MELDARA

Their daughter ARDITA

KING DORUM

His son TORO, who loves Ardita

A FAIRY GODMOTHER

PETER SIMPLE, a peasant

King Corum's SERVANT

King Dorum's SERVANT

An OFFICIAL

A PAGE

SCENE I

A room in KING CORUM'S house. A window at back with long curtains. An entrance at each side.

ARDITA and the QUEEN are sitting sewing. Letters are brought in by a page.

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

A. (*glancing at them*). More catalogues, I suppose. Cabbages, cabbages, cabbages. I'm sick of them. I haven't had a new frock for ages and the palace wants doing up so badly, and Dad *will* spend everything on those wretched cabbages. (*Goes to window.*) Look at them; fields and fields and fields of them, and all for the sake of producing one bigger than King Dorum can produce. It's absolutely idiotic.

Q. M. My dear, you mustn't speak of your father like that. And, after all, cabbages are very wholesome food, and we give a great many to the poor.

A. Oh, mother, you know perfectly well that everyone's fed up with them. We can't get people to take them away. And it's got to such a pitch that I'm sure there'll be a war between father and King Dorum presently, and I shall never, never be able to marry Toro. (*Weeps.*)

Q. M. Well, there are plenty of other nice young men about, my dear, and perhaps in time your father and King Dorum will get

CABBAGES AND KINGS

tired of trying to beat one another's cabbages.

A. Oh no, they won't. They'll go on and on as long as that wretched agricultural show is held on No-Man's Common. And more and more money will be spent on gardeners, and experiments, and artificial manures, and in the end we shall all turn into cabbages. I often feel like one. (*She sits gazing gloomily in front of her, then after a moment she jumps up.*) No, I won't stand it a minute longer. I shall ask my Fairy Godmother to help. What's the good of having a Fairy Godmother if she can't help you when you're in trouble?

Q. M. Oh, Ardita, you know your father doesn't like interference. I really think you'd better not. And besides, it's so dreadfully difficult talking in rhyme. I remember the strain at your christening. I shall go out, Ardita—I really can't . . . (*Goes out.*)

A. I don't care.

(*Stands up and recites solemnly.*)

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

I rub my ring, I rub my chain,
I turn me round and round again.

(She makes her skirt into a "cheese.")

Now I've made a fairy cheese,
Fairy lady, help me, please.

(FAIRY GODMOTHER appears at window. She carries a bag and has a stick.)

F. G. Here I am, my dear, you see,
Tell me what you want of me.

A. *(curtseys)*.

Dear Fairy Godmother, good day,
Your counsel and your help I pray.

(FAIRY GODMOTHER comes round to side entrance —unless she is able to get through window.)

F. G. What is it, child? You seem distressed.
Tell me your need. I'll do my best.

A. Oh, Godmother, how kind you are,
I'll tell you all. You see my fa——
My father's got the strangest craze
For growing cabbages . . .

Oh, dear Godmother, I simply can't keep
up the rhyming. It's so frightfully hard
to tell you about cabbages in poetry.
Would blank verse do?

CABBAGES AND KINGS

- F. G. Never mind, my child. As it happens, it's Poet Holiday in Fairyland to-day, and all the poets are shut up, so we'll talk in prose too. Besides, I know all about this affair. They're perfectly absurd about their cabbages. Now let me see. When is this show?
- A. In three months. They're just sowing fresh cabbage seed.
- F. G. (*takes out tablets*). Very well, dear child, I'll see to it.
- A. Oh, Godmother, how good and clever you are. And shall I be able to marry my Toro?
- F. G. Of course, of course. He's a very nice young man, and I shall do what I can to help on the match. By the way, there's a young man coming up the garden at this moment.
- A. (*goes to window*). Toro! Oh, how rash.
- (TORO *puts his head in at window*.)
- T. I wanted so badly to see you—I couldn't keep away. Pa anywhere about? (*Sees FAIRY GODMOTHER.*) Oh, I beg your pardon. How do you do, Madam?

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

F. G. You don't remember me, Toro? I'm Dita's fairy godmother, you know. Met you last at her christening. You weren't quite so big then.

T. Delighted to meet you, Madam! Ardita's looking well—isn't she?

F. G. Very well, I think.

A. Oh, goodness, Dad's coming. I can hear him talking in the passage. What *shall* we do?

F. G. Oh, I'll see to that. Get into my chariot, both of you. It's behind the summer-house. You can tell the coachman to take you up for a ten-minutes' ride. I'll join you later.

(She stands in front of door right, making passes.)

Snibber, snabber, cockalorum:

Sneeze until you're blue, King Corum.

(She hides behind window curtain. Enter KING CORUM with QUEEN. He sneezes continually at every other word. He holds in his hand a packet labelled "Best Cabbage Seed.")

K. C. Oh dear, oh dear . . . I believe I must have caught cold . . . my dear. . . .

CABBAGES AND KINGS

I thought . . . I heard . . . voices.
Where's the gardener . . . I've got some
new . . . cabbage seed. Wonderful—now
we'll beat that . . . conceited . . . oh
dear—oh dear . . . I *have* got a cold.

Q. M. (*anxiously*). I really think you ought
to be in bed. You're not fit to be about.

K. C. (*puts packet on table*). Came on . . .
quite suddenly . . . I was all right . . .
confound . . .

Q. M. If you don't take care of it you won't
be fit to superintend the cabbage planting.

K. C. (*still sneezing*). Perhaps . . . I had
better . . . Must get well for that.
Gardeners so careless . . . Yes, yes . . .
Eucalyptus . . . Come along . . .

(*They go out. FAIRY GODMOTHER emerges
from behind curtain.*)

F. G. That's all right. Now what am I going
to do about this affair?

(*Walks to and fro with finger to brow, thinking
deeply. Sees cabbage seed on table.*)

Ah, I have an idea. Yes, I've got it. Just
a few preparations. (*She pulls cloak out*

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

of her bag and puts it on, also a pair of spectacles, and with a pencil from her pocket makes a few lines on her face in front of a mirror.)

There, that's done it. (*To audience.*)
How's that? Pretty good, don't you think? And now I must be getting off to look for a suitable person. Where are those two children? They ought to be back.

(*Looks out of window.*) Hi, come down, you two. You've been out long enough. Oh, here they come.

(*Enter TORO and ARDITA. FAIRY GODMOTHER hobbles with stick.*)

T. Good morrow, good Gossip. Can I be of any assistance to a poor old dame? Do you require any help in getting over a stile, for instance? I am a most worthy young man. Pray allow me. (*Offers arm.*)

F. G. You're an impudent rascal.

However, I'll do my best to help the two of you. You're quite a pretty pair.

A. Oh, godmother, how will you do it?

F. G. You'll know in good time.

CABBAGES AND KINGS

But first of all, I must bewitch some of this cabbage seed.

(She empties some of it into her hand and walks round waving her arms and singing to the tune of "John Peel.")

With a leeny, loony, larny, lay,
Grow little seed as fast as you may,
Grow you by night, and grow you by day,
With a leeny, a loony, larny !

(The other two take hands and join in the song, and they finally all go out, dancing and singing.)

All. With a sawny, soony, sarny, see,
All will be well for you and me,
Grow little seed as fast as can be,
With a sawny, a soony, sarny !

CURTAIN

SCENE II.—*Three months later.*

Outside the Cabbage Tent at the show on No-Man's Common.

The tent can be indicated by curtains across the back with a large card on which

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

is printed "Cabbages." An official sits at a table on one side of the opening of the tent. There is another table at the other side.

Enter KING DORUM left, with his son, and attendant carrying large box marked :—

"DORUM R. FRAGILE."

The official rises and salutes.

K. D. Page, bring forward the Cabbage Box.

Off. (*pleasantly*). It looks as if your Majesty means to beat all records this year.

K. D. Yes, yes. We've done quite nicely, I think. I've taken a lot of trouble, a lot of trouble. Nothing can be done without trouble, my good man. Even kings have to take trouble, you know.

Off. Will your Majesty kindly fill up the form? Or shall I give it to one of your Majesty's retainers?

K. D. (*fussily*). No, no. I will do it myself. I always prefer to do things myself. I believe that a monarch should show his people a good example by doing things himself. I make a point of it. I even fill my own fountain-pen myself. Ha, ha! Give me the papers.

CABBAGES AND KINGS

(*He goes to table left and begins to fill in the papers. There is no ink in his fountain-pen. He is busy shaking it as quietly as possible when KING CORUM enters, right, with QUEEN MELDARA, PRINCESS ARDITA, and a retainer bearing a large basket marked :—*

“CORUM R. WITH CARE.”

KING CORUM stands glaring at KING DORUM'S back. TORO and ARDITA exchange glances. The QUEEN looks anxious. The official uncomfortable. He salutes.)

Off. Good morning, your Majesty.

(KING DORUM looks round. The Kings bow distantly. KING DORUM resumes his efforts with pen.)

Off. Your Majesty has brought your consignment of cabbages, I see. Has your Majesty had a successful season?

K. C. (*looking at KING DORUM'S box*). Excellent, excellent, never better.

Off. Will your Majesty fill in the papers?

K. C. Certainly.

(KING CORUM goes to table, right, and begins to fill in papers. KING DORUM is still in difficulties.)

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

TORO *throws a flower across to* ARDITA.)

Q. M. (*whispering*). Oh, Dita, *do* be careful.

You know how angry your father would be if he saw you.

K. C. (*watches* KING DORUM, *who is still struggling with his pen. Then, sarcastically*). I hope your Majesty will have more success with your Majesty's cabbages than your Majesty appears to be having with your Majesty's fountain-pen.

K. D. (*angrily*). I hope your Majesty's ability to grow cabbages is greater than your Majesty's ability to mind your Majesty's own business. Otherwise, I fear your Majesty may find yourself in a foolish position.

K. C. (*hand on sword*). Sir!

K. D. (*hand on sword*). Sir!

(QUEEN MELDARA *comes anxiously forward*.)

Q. M. (*nervously*). Corum, dear, I think the horses are waiting, and there's a hot lunch. Are you ready?

(*Enter* PETER SIMPLE *carrying an enormous basket, labelled* :—

“PETER SIMPUL. KABBIDGE.”)

CABBAGES AND KINGS

P. S. Be this the cabbage tent?

Off. Yes, my man.

P. S. (*looking round at them all*). I've brought a cabbage. (*To KING DORUM.*) Be you ticket collector?

K. D. Certainly not. (*KING CORUM smiles.*)

P. S. No offence meant. (*To KING CORUM.*) Be you ticket collector?

K. C. This is the ticket collector, my good man.

P. S. Thank you.
It's a rare cabbage.

A. (*coming forward*). How interesting! Is that it?

P. S. Yes. Here it be. It's took some getting here. I never see such a cabbage. It's near as big as my cottage. My old woman made me bring 'un here. I'd never 'a' thought on it myself.

(*The Kings both come forward as PETER unpacks the basket. The cabbage could be made of green paper, but it need not be taken out of the hamper.*)

P. S. (*proudly*). There 'un be!

(*The Kings both fall back in amazement.*)

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

T. (*aside to ARDITA*). That's done it!

Q. M. My good man, how came you to grow such an enormous cabbage?

P. S. I'm sure I dunno. The seed was given me by an old woman, a queer old body who dropped in one day for a drink o' milk. It's a rare cabbage, bain't it?

T. (*aside*). Good old Fairy Godmother.

K. D. He's beaten us, Corum.

K. C. Yes, I think there's no doubt about that. (*Swallows hard. To PETER S.*) My congratulations, my brave fellow, on your splendid achievement.

P. S. Nay, sir, I'm only a simple farmer. Any fool can grow a cabbage!

(*The Kings look away, embarrassed.*)

Not but what I'll be glad if I get the prize—if I do get it, that is. It would be nowt to great gentlemen like you, you wouldn't understand, but it means a deal to me. My wife'll be fine and pleased if I win it.

Off. Kindly fill in the form.

P. S. Nay, but I dunno how to write.

K. D. Allow me. (*Takes paper.*)

CABBAGES AND KINGS

K. C. (*smiling to DORUM*). Pray use my pen.

K. D. Thank you, Corum.

(*He fills in paper, talking in background to CORUM.*)

T. Queen Meldara, pray allow me to take you to the refreshment tent to have an ice. Princess Ardita, permit me. (*Offers arm to QUEEN.*)

(*KING CORUM hands paper to PETER SIMPLE.*)

P. S. Thank you kindly, sir.

K. C. (*to DORUM*). Shall we take a stroll?

(*They go out arm in arm.*)

Off. Do you know who those gentlemen were?

P. S. No.

Off. King Dorum and King Corum!

P. S. (*stands with hands held up in astonishment*). Kings! Kings! (*He runs left to look after them and comes back, still gasping.*) Kings! Oh, why didn't I bring my old woman!

CURTAIN

IN ARCADY

CHARACTERS

A SHEPHERD

A SHEPHERDESS

A DANCER FROM TOWN

SCENE.—*A little glade. On the left a path leading to a cottage in the distance; rose-trees bordering the path. On the right a grassy mound or rustic bench. There should be a clear space in the centre for the dancing.*

When the curtain goes up the SHEPHERDESS is sitting on the bank right. The SHEPHERD is lying on the ground at her feet, playing a wooden pipe. The pipe is heard before the curtain rises. The SHEPHERDESS wears a sleeveless and collarless blouse of white linen, and a brown skirt and low bodice. She has no shoes, and wears flowers in her hair. She carries about with her a white lamb.

IN ARCADY

The SHEPHERD wears a short white tunic draped with a sheepskin, and sandals fastened with ribbons round his legs. His pipe is hung from his neck. The SHEPHERDESS is making a daisy chain.

She. Dear shepherd, play the little tune again!

He. I cannot. . . . It was not a pretty tune.

She. I thought it was a *very* pretty tune.

He (*petulantly*). I wish you'd put that foolish chain away!

She. There then—'tis finished. You shall wear it, love.

(Throws chain over his neck.)

(He jumps up, breaks the chain crossly, and throws it away, she meanwhile regarding him with great astonishment.)

She. Why do you treat my pretty flowers so?

He (*running forward and kneeling at her feet*). Pardon, sweetheart, I would not be unkind.

(Rises and walks left a few steps.)

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

I know not what has tuned my thoughts
amiss ;

Too many lazy hours perhaps—or too much
sun ;

Will you forgive my thoughtlessness ?

She.

Why, yes !

(She jumps up and runs to him ; they kiss. He puts his arm round her shoulders and together they walk round to centre front, slowly.)

She. At last the day grows cooler—do you
feel

A little breeze come creeping thro' the wood ?

Come—let us dance ! *(He shakes his head.)*

Or shall we go and see

How many rosebuds have come out o'er night ?

(He shakes his head again.)

My shepherd—there's some shadow on your
heart,

Come—tell your shepherdess what troubles
you.

He. Nothing—the heat perhaps ; a passing
thought

One might some time grow weary of this place.

IN ARCADY

She. Weary! Of all the flowers—and the
birds—

And Mimi—and the sun and gentle clouds!

*(Shakes her head thoughtfully, and crosses to
right.)*

Weary! *(Picks up lamb.)* Oh, Mimi—what a
funny thing,

With you and me to love, and not one care.

(Turns to him.) Well—I will give your weariness a rest,

Mimi and I have many things to do.

(Crosses up stage to left back.)

He. I thought you said that you would dance
with me!

She. I thought *you* said you did not care to
dance!

He. Oh, if you do not wish!

She. You foolish child!

(Runs down stage to him.)

Come—we will dance as do the girls and boys

On summer evenings on the village green,

And Mimi shall be audience and judge.

(She puts Mimi on seat. They dance a country

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

dance. The DANCER FROM TOWN comes in right—unseen—and watches. She wears a cloak over a short dancing-dress. She comes forward as they finish, holding out her hands.)

Dancer. Well done—well done! But what a pretty dance!

I'd like to learn it. Will you show it me?

(SHEPHERDESS runs to SHEPHERD while she speaks—centre left—and regards the DANCER rather shyly and curiously, peeping round him. SHEPHERD stares at the DANCER eagerly.)

He. We should be proud to show you anything!

(DANCER smiles very graciously.)

She (gaining courage). Where do you come from?

D. (with a gesture). From the town, my child. See, yonder in the road my carriage waits.

(SHEPHERDESS runs up stage and stands on tiptoe to look.)

So hot it was—so sultry in the town,
My eyes were longing for this lovely green.

IN ARCADY

(She moves about as she speaks—strokes Mimi, touches the leaves, finally sits right with Mimi on her knee.)

I saw your cottage chimneys from the road,
And thought that I might find refreshment
here.

He (eagerly). The best we have is yours:
(sadly) 'tis poor enough.

(Runs out left. SHEPHERDESS slowly crosses to right, watching DANCER all the time. DANCER has put Mimi on the seat beside her and is engaged in doing up her shoe. As DANCER sits up her cloak falls off. SHEPHERDESS regards her with great interest.)

She (touching dress with one finger). Is that
the latest fashion in the town?

D. (laughs). The latest fashion! Scarcely
that, my child:

I am a dancer—'tis a dancing-dress.

She. A dancer! Do you dance the whole day
long?

D. (smiles). Not all day long—but sometimes
half the night.

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

She. A dancer! And you watched us dancing here!

You must have laughed to see our awkward ways.

D. (condescendingly). No, no, my child—I like your country steps.

I'll show you how we do it in the town.

(She dances. SHEPHERDESS watches her. SHEPHERD enters left with milk, bread and a pot of honey on a rustic tray. DANCER smiles at him and continues her dance. He stands transfixed. SHEPHERDESS goes to him and takes tray away and puts it down left. He still gazes at DANCER. She finishes and throws herself on seat right. SHEPHERD goes to her. SHEPHERDESS turns away left and begins to tie up roses.)

He. How beautiful—oh! how beautiful it was!

D. Oh—I can do far better steps than those. The gallants in the town, who love me much, Call me the fairy dancer! (*Laughs.*) Foolishness!

How hot it is! (*Fans herself.*)

He. Oh, how could I forget?

IN ARCADY

(Fetches tray and brings it to her. Kneels while she takes the glass from which she sips, and a piece of bread which she nibbles.)

D. You must not kneel. Come, sit beside me here,

And tell me what you do the whole day long.

(During this conversation SHEPHERDESS glances at them from time to time, finally takes Mimi under her arm and goes out left.)

He. Till now my hours were filled with foolish tasks,

With idle joys that have grown wearisome.

(Rises and comes down front.)

Henceforward I shall spend my time in dreams,
Sweet dreams, sad dreams—and yet more
sweet than sad.

D. How good this honey is!

He. 'Twould please me much
If you would take the little jar away.

D. How kind of you. . . . The gallants in
the town

Bring me sweet things in boxes made of gold.
I like your honey better: every morn,
Sipping its fragrance, I shall think of you.

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

He (sadly). I wish I were a gallant of the town!

(SHEPHERDESS *re-enters left with a watering-can and begins to water the roses.*)

D. No, no, I like you better as you are. The sun's soft kiss has touched your cheek to warmth,

The song of wood-birds echoes in your voice!
(*Pensively.*) I wish *I* were a country shepherdess.

She (aside). Poor sheep—— She'd try and teach them how to dance!

(*She goes off with empty can.*)

D. (crosses to rose-trees). Why did she make the roses wet? (*Smells.*) How sweet! May I have one?

He. All, ev'ry one I have!

D. No, just this one. (*He picks it.*) See, I will wear it here.

And when it fades, as roses do, alas!

I'll lay it 'neath my pillow every night

And dream of you among the birds and flowers.

But I must go—I have been here too long.

IN ARCADY

He. Oh, no! Indeed you *could* not stay too long!

(DANCER reaches for cloak. SHEPHERD runs and takes it and holds it tightly clasped to him.)

He. Will you not wait a little while?

D. (imperiously). My cloak!

(SHEPHERD helps her to put it on.)

He. Let me at least go with you to the road!

D. No, no, I would far rather go alone.

Please bid your shepherdess farewell for me.

(Prepares to go.)

He. Your honey!

D. Oh, my honey! (Takes it.) Fare you well.

(Goes out right. SHEPHERD is left standing looking after her in despair. SHEPHERDESS enters left, she looks round in surprise.)

She. Gone! Has she gone? And bade me no farewell?

These townish ladies have some funny ways!

(Meditatively.) I did not like her much—

Her feet were large,

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

Perhaps from so much dancing—— And she
looked

So old and faded. (*To SHEPHERD, who takes
no notice.*) Don't you think so, love?

And rather mincing in her words and ways.

(*Copying.*) "I wish I were a country shep-
herdess—

I love the little birds and little lambs."

He. Gone—and I shall not see her any more!

Come back—come back—or I must follow you!

She (*running after him as he goes off and trying
to hold him back*). You shall not go! you
shall not go!

He. I must. (*Goes.*)

(*SHEPHERDESS throws herself on ground, left, and
weeps. Presently she sits up and draws
Mimi to her.*)

She. O Mimi—has my shepherd gone away?

And shall we never see him any more?

I've no one left to love me now but you.

Promise me that you'll never leave me, dear.

(*Puts her arm round Mimi's neck and buries
her head in its wool. SHEPHERD returns
slowly. In one hand he holds the rose, in*

IN ARCADY

the other the pot of honey. Comes slowly down centre.)

He. Thrown in the road—the rose she vowed to keep—

Trampled beneath her careless carriage wheels.

My pot of honey she declared so sweet,

Under the hedge—for any passer-by!

(Turns and sees SHEPHERDESS.)

And here's my darling shepherdess in tears—

(He goes up to her and bends over her.)

What is it, dear? What are you crying for?

(SHEPHERDESS gets up slowly, drying her eyes;

he puts his arm round her.)

She. I thought you'd gone away for ever—
more—

Gone, with the pretty dancer from the town.

He (walks away a few steps slowly and half turns away). The ladies of the town are not for me,

I think I do not understand their ways—

What foolishness! To let my simple eyes

Be dazzled by a dancing Will-o'-the-Wisp!

(Turns to SHEPHERDESS.)

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

Here shines my sun ! Here reigns my heart's
fair queen !

Come, Queen, and sit upon your throne, and I
Will be your humble slave, and play to you.

*(They cross right and take up positions as at
beginning.)*

She (meditatively stroking Mimi). I'm glad you
did not like her after all,

And yet, she had a very pretty face—
I hope she is not lonely in the town !

(He plays a few bars of tune.)

Oh, Mimi, listen ! It's the tune we love.

CURTAIN

FATHER CHRISTMAS

(*A Play for a Toy Theatre*)*

CHARACTERS

HELEN

RICHARD

FATHER CHRISTMAS

SCENERY.—*A night nursery. Fireplace at back. A bed on each side of the room with foot facing front. RICHARD and HELEN are asleep in the beds. They are two dolls. They must have strings attached to them from behind so that they can be made to sit up in bed. The strings are manipulated from above. Unless the dolls have very loose legs it would be best for them to have none at all.*

FATHER CHRISTMAS *is of stiff cardboard with piece attached below so that he can be pushed up and down through a cut in the*

* Could also be adapted for children.

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

stage. The room is almost dark when the curtain goes up. There is a window at the back, and a moonlight effect could be produced by electric torch behind the window. HELEN and RICHARD are asleep. There is a thumping noise which comes from the chimney. Some small pieces of brick and some soot fall on to the floor.

SCENE I

H. Richard, Richard! Are you awake?

R. (*sleepily*). Yes. What is it? Has he come?

H. (*louder*). Richard! (*More thumps in chimney.*)

R. What's the matter?

H. Don't you hear? There's a noise. Listen. (*More noise.*)

R. (*sits up in bed*). Do you think it's Father Christmas?

H. (*sits up*). I think it *must* be.

Voice (*from chimney*). Help! Help!

H. What is it?

Voice. I'm stuck.

H. How dreadful! You got down last year.

Voice (*puffing*). I know. Must have got

FATHER CHRISTMAS

fatter. Wife made me put on extra waistcoat.

R. (*softly*). Helen!

H. It's all right, Dickie. He won't hurt you. Don't be frightened.

R. (*indignantly*). I'm *not* frightened.

H. (*loud*). Can we do anything?

Voice. Only one thing's any good.

H. What?

Voice. A spell to make the chimney give way a bit; and I can't get at my spelling book.

R. Helen's very good at spelling.

H. Sh! Richard!

Voice (*hopefully*). Is she?

R. (*eagerly*). Yes.

Voice. Can she spell the first column in the book? It's got something about chimney in it, I'm certain.

H. Yes. I know.

C—H—I—M—N—E—Y. Chimney.

C—H—R—I—S—T—M—A—S. Christmas.

R—E—L—E—A—S—E. Release.

Voice. That's it. That's it. Say it three times.

(HELEN repeats three times.)

Voice. Hooray. I'm coming!

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

H. and R. He's coming! (Noise of bricks and soot.)

(FATHER CHRISTMAS'S legs appear in fireplace.)

CURTAIN

SCENE II

(FATHER CHRISTMAS, who has been pushed up through a slit in the stage, is in the middle of the floor. It is lighter. HELEN and RICHARD are sitting up in bed. Toys on the beds at the end.)

F. C. There, I think that's all there is for you. But remember, no looking till to-morrow.

H. Of course not. Thank you so much. I'm sure they're lovely. Thank Father Christmas, Richard.

R. (shyly). Thank you very much.

F. C. Well, I'd better be off. It'll have to be the window this time. I don't want to try that chimney again.

H. Oh dear, I'm afraid you won't be able to get through. It's got bars outside.

F. C. Good gracious! I certainly can't stay here all night.

R. Can't you go through the door?

FATHER CHRISTMAS

F. C. (*indignantly*). My *dear* Richard! Did you ever hear of Father Christmas going through a *door*? It would never do. I won't hear of it.

H. At the pantomime the Fairy Queen came through the floor.

F. C. The very thing! Do you remember how she did it?

H. Oh yes, she said:—

Di, doh, dum, doo,

Open, floor, and let me through!

F. C. Of course, of course. That's how it is done. My memory's shocking. What is there underneath?

H. The dining-room. And it has *very* large windows.

F. C. Capital. (*Louder.*) Hullo, you reindeer! Can you hear me? (*Noise of bells above.*) Meet me outside the dining-room windows in three minutes sharp. (*Bells again.*) I think, if you don't mind, we'd better all say the charm together; it's stronger that way. But be sure to say "him" instead of "me" or you might find your beds in the dining-room.

R. That *would* be fun!

EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

H. Oh *no*, Dick!

F. C. Of course not. Now then.

All Together. { Di, doh, dum, doo,
Open, floor, and let me (him)
through!

F. C. Good-bye, Helen. Good-bye, Richard.

H. and R. Good-bye. Good-bye.

(FATHER CHRISTMAS *disappears through floor.*
Bumps, and then bells.)

H. He's off. Wasn't it exciting?

R. I'm going to sleep to make to-morrow come quickly so that I can see my presents.

H. But *wasn't* it exciting? Dick! *Dick!*
He's asleep. I shan't go to sleep. I shall lie awake and think about it all. About Father Christmas, and chimneys, and charms, and fairies, and . . . good night, Dick.

R. (*sleepily*). Good night.

CURTAIN

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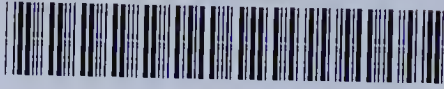
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